

Group News

This year's AGM was held in February having been postponed because of the January floods. The AGM was held prior to a talk by the County Archaeologist for Cumbria, Richard Newman (Page 3). This has meant that our Members Evening has been delayed until January 2006.

The Committee was re-elected by the membership, with the addition of Mike Godfrey, who has kindly agreed to act as Treasurer. Tricia Crompton has resigned as Treasurer in order to concentrate on further studies in archaeology. Liz Hawkins has agreed to take the role of Membership Secretary. Harry Hawkins will continue as Chairman with Richard Steven as Vice-Chairman, Phyllis Rouston as Secretary, Martin Railton as Newsletter Editor and Martin Joyce as Publicity Officer. Tricia Crompton will continue to be a committee member.

This summer will see our first conference entitled "The Romans in the Eden Valley" which will explore the evidence for Roman settlement in our part of the country. A number of notable speakers have been invited, and it promises to be an exciting and unique event for Appleby. I hope you will mark a space in your diary!

Martin Railton

THE ROMANS IN THE EDEN VALLEY

Saturday, 17 September 2005

The Eden Valley is full of Roman sites and history and yet little has been done in recent years to bring together what is known about the Roman presence and the monuments they left behind. Appleby Archaeology has asked specialists in Roman history to present their knowledge at a one day conference to be held at Appleby Grammar School.

The Romans in Cumbria

Professor David Shotter,
Lancaster University

The Roman Sites of the Eden Valley

Tony Wilmott,
English Heritage

Roman Carlisle

Frank Giecco,
Principal Archaeologist, North Pennines Archaeology

*Additional
Speaker to be
confirmed*

Entrance: £8.00
Buffet Lunch:
£4.00



Details and a
booking form
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Pre-conquest Ironwork from Asby-winderwath Common with Ben Edwards

Members of the Appleby Archaeology Group were intrigued to learn how a "heap of old iron" found near Great Asby was meticulously investigated and found to be a significant hoard from the Anglo-Saxon period. Mr Ben Edwards, former county archaeologist for Lancashire, gave a lively description of how this had been achieved. His talk was illustrated by slides and his own detailed drawings of the finds.

In the early 1990s a metal-detectorist found a collection of metal work on Asby Winderwath Common. It was near the remains of some small buildings and did not appear to be in any type of container. Amongst the many pieces of rusty iron was a small decorative plaque which was sufficiently interesting for it and some other items from the hoard to be sent to the British Museum.

The plaque was about 4 inches long, had been gilded and was punctured by a rivet hole. It was engraved with a complex pattern which showed two dog-like animals facing away from one another and two birds facing inwards. Similar decorations have been found on artefacts from Scotland and Norway and in the carving of a cross fragment from Croft-in-Tees and this suggested the plaque was an example of 9th century Northumbrian art and that the other artefacts came from the same period.

Mr Edwards then did further research on all the items from the hoard. The metal work was carefully examined and drawn

in detail. Once that was completed, a painstaking search was made for records of similar artefacts and over time most were identified and dated.

He described two instances where manuscripts had helped him to identify objects. A num-



ber of short blades were found at Asby. Similar blades had been found in a hoards including ones from County Durham and from Dumfries and Galloway, but it was a pre-Norman conquest manuscript calendar, depicting men using such blades to scythe, that helped him to place the blades in context.

The collection also contained items that looked like bits used for drilling. Bits have been used since Roman times and in this instance it was the Bayeux Tapestry that helped to identify the items for what they were. The tapestry shows men drilling with bits similar to those found in the hoard and, as there had

been little change in technology since Saxon times and as similar tools had been found in a known Saxon hoard from Lincolnshire, it seemed reasonable to conclude that those found at Asby were indeed drill bits of that period.

He went on to describe many of the other objects including bells, probably for cattle, keys, parts of bolts and latch lifters. Similar items had been found in the Lincolnshire hoard and in other finds from as far a field as Czechoslovakia and, closer to home, at Dacre and Brougham. Most hoards have examples of axes, swords, knives and saddle decorations and the Asby hoard was no different.

Mr Edwards emphasised that it was sometimes impossible to identify an object. However, if two or more were seen to be identical, as was the case with two small rods with curled ends found in the hoard, it was safe to assume they had some useful function.

He concluded by asking why the iron work had come to be on Asby Winderwath Common? He thought it unlikely that the hoard was associated with the buildings as they were too square for that period. The people who used tools of this kind would have lived in long houses on farmsteads, such as the one that has been excavated at Ribblehead and it is more likely that this was a collection of scrap metal put together perhaps with the idea of recycling.

Phyllis Rouston

The Work of the County Archaeologist with Richard Newman

The AGM of the Appleby Archaeology Group, which had been postponed from January, was held before the February meeting at which the county archaeologist Richard Newman described the work of the County Archaeology Service. Before taking his present post Mr Newman was Director of Lancaster University Archaeology Unit.

The County Archaeology Service covers the whole of Cumbria apart from the Lake District National Park, the area of Cumbria within the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Hadrian's Wall. The Service provides advice and information on the protection and conservation of historic sites, on all aspects of archaeology, and on the maintenance of the Historic Environment Records (HER) which were previously known as the Sites and Monuments Records. It also provides advice on the archaeological aspects of planning and development. It works closely with a number of other bodies including English Heritage, local authorities, conservation trusts and the National Parks. He outlined the responsibilities of assessing and researching sites for conservation and or regeneration.

There is a wealth of archaeology in Cumbria with sites from prehistory to the second world war but, as in the rest of the country, ninety per cent of sites are post 1800. Early sites

are often identified from aerial photographs. Recently Romano-British sites had been identified and recorded in Cumbria at the rate of one a year. Some sites are at risk from nature. Mr Newman mentioned Salton Pit, a deep under sea mine sunk in 1730-31 and some Iron Age features on the Solway, which are threatened by coastal erosion. When this happens decisions have to be taken whether to protect and conserve or to record the characteristics before they disappear.

Cumbria has many earth works including a moated site near Kendal and the remains of previous industrial activity such as charcoal blast furnaces. Earthworks are often found on farmland and help and advice is given to the landowners on how they can be preserved. Stewardship schemes may be available to help farmers to look after a site. Guidance may also be sought for many of the standing features such as medieval buildings, churches, crosses and grave stones whose inscriptions can give insight into changing social attitudes to death. He emphasised that many buildings and sites forming part of our historical heritage are still in use and that this could present problems when alterations had to be made such as providing access for the disabled.

Mr Newman spoke in some detail of the archaeologist's role in planning. Planning lists come from the districts on a weekly basis and applications that may

have archaeological implications are investigated. Applications relating to large sites or to any site near a known archaeological feature are likely to be of interest and further details will be sought, and the Historic Environment Records will be searched. If there appeared to be a threat to the historic environment, the County Archaeology Service would arrange for an independent agency such as North Pennines Archaeology to survey the area and if appropriate to carry out an excavation. On average about 120 of the planning proposals received in a year affect the historic environment. Decisions are sometimes difficult. Mr Newman spoke about places, such as Maryport, an example of a planned 18th century town and a known port since Roman times, where today's needs for regeneration have to be met while minimising the impact on the historic environment. He stressed that it was important that planning decisions took into account not just a specific feature but also the surrounding landscape.

The County Archaeology Service is becoming more involved in providing information accessible to everyone and one example is the positioning of information boards at historic locations. The Historic Monument Records for Cumbria, with over twenty thousand entries, provide basic information, which is of par-

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ticular use to planners, but it does not attempt to interpret a site. It is hoped that in the future an interactive website can be developed containing details about the structure and location of sites and information on how they may have been used in the past. In some cases there might be a visual reconstruction.

Mr Newman concluded by saying that we lived in an historic environment and that this heritage was something that should be described, recorded and, where possible, preserved. Sometimes the best way to preserve something was for it to remain undisturbed.

Phyllis Rouston

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE!

If you have not already done so please send your subscription for 2005 to
Liz Hawkins, 60 Holme Riggs
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SUMMER EVENTS

Landscapes of the Eden Valley

13-15 May 2005

A weekend field school exploring the Landscapes of Cumbria. Friday evening: Tom Clare - archaeology and history (open to all for £1.50). Saturday: with Tom Clare around Crosby Garrett. Sunday: Crosby Ravensworth and Maulds Meaburn with Brian Roberts. Bookings for the weekend taken by Harry Hawkins 01768 86430.

Four Stones Hill, Hawswater

Sunday 22 May 2005

Summer walk exploring a prehistoric landscape of standing stones and cairns. Leader Martin Joyce 017683 61131. Meet at Bampton Village Hall, NY 516 181.

Visit to the

Thornborough Henges

Sunday 19th June 2005

A day trip to this important prehistoric site. Leader Harry Hawkins 01768 86430. Meet at the Moot Hall, Appleby 10.30 return 5.00pm. Bring packet lunch/pub lunch. Details to be finalised.

Asby Winderwath Common

19 July 2005

A walk to Asby Winderwath Common - site of the Preconquest Ironwork Hoard (November Meeting). Leader Marjory Campion/Harry Hawkins. Meet 7.00pm Copper Mine Lane NY 663 114.



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